

# **Prospects for the Achievement of the MDGs through Scaling up NGOs' Good Practices: The case of AAE-initiated ABE**

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***Prospects for the Achievement of the MDGs: Scaling up NGOs' Good Practices***  
***The case of AAE-initiated ABE***

**Abstract**

Scaling up—the expansion of impact beyond the local level—has to be an important concern for NGOs and development actors to bring about wider impact and make a difference. NGOs often test out new approaches and start small. Despite their increased number, their enhanced understanding of the issues of poverty and growing engagement in a wider range of development activities, so far, they could not bring about a far reaching impact and make a difference. Even when their initiatives become successful, they usually remain small, especially compared to the scale of the challenges of poverty. Their success only becomes sustainable or reaches significant scale if they influence national level development programmes and policies.

Increasing number of national and international NGOs with wide range of development activities are taking part in the country's development endeavors. However, impacts of their intervention are, by and large, limited to their project areas and experiences of scaling up NGOs' good practice and their studies are very limited. Thus, studying successful scaling up practices and analysis of their strategies is essential to draw up lessons and enhance the impact of NGOs.

Though various development actors continued their effort to address development problems, the humbling observation indicates that little is achieved, and significant portions of society do not yet have accessed to and benefited from basic services. The sluggish expansion of primary education through the conventional approach could not catch up the growing demand for basic education, let alone achieving the MDG of attaining UPE by 2015 and gender equity by 2005. This situation calls for nothing less than critical policy measures. In recognition of the problem, various responses have been exhibited from policy makers and development actors. Among the responses was the introduction of *ACCESS* by AAE. ActionAid Ethiopia (AAE) has been engaged in the delivery, advocacy and scaling up of its 'good practice' in the area of alternative approach to basic education. The approach emerged from ActionAid international field-based experiences and referred to as *ACCESS* denoting Appropriate Cost-effective Centers for Education within the School Systems. Despite a laudable chorus calling for NGOs to scale up their effective initiatives, achievements are conspicuously small. Unless those small-scale NGO-initiated 'good practices' are scaled up, they remain 'islands of success'.

This research broadly indicates that there are prospects for scaling up NGOs' good practices and make a difference. Projections indicate that many developing countries are much behind achieving the MDGs, and Ethiopia is not an exception. As seen in this study, NGOs may have 'good practices' that can significantly contribute to the achievement of the MDGs and effective and sustainable development. The findings have brought to surface the various mixes of strategies and the extent of difference ActionAid Ethiopia (AAE) has made in Alternative Basic Education. *ACCESS i.e.* AAE's brand for alternative approach to basic education) has become part of the mainstream development activity under the education sector development programme and in the NGOs sector in Ethiopia. Unless NGOs properly and strategically plan and execute scaling up, their 'good practices' remain as 'a drop in the ocean'. Correspondingly, development actors should not be obsessed and rigid to promoting the conventional approaches. Rather, they should open up rooms to entertain and scale up NGOs' good practices to make wider impact in development. The case studied in this research is good example of how to make a difference.

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## ACRONYMS

AAE	ActionAid Ethiopia
ABE	Alternative Basic Education
ACCESS	Appropriate Cost-effective Centers for Education within the School Systems
ADA	<i>Amhara</i> Development Association
ATKLT	<i>Amhara's</i> Region Education Development and Cooperation
BEN	Basic Education Network
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CBE	Community-Based Education
CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DA	Development Area
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EMRDA	Ethiopian Muslim's Relief and Development Association
ESDP	Education Sector Development Programme
FCE	Facilitator for Change Ethiopia
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GROs	Grassroots Organizations
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFAF	Ministry of Foreign Affair of Finland
MOE	Ministry of Education
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NFEP	Non-Formal Education Program
NFPE	Non-Formal Primary Education
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSA	Non-State Actors
IDP	Integrated Development Programme
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SNNPR	Southern Nation Nationalities People Region
SU	Scaling Up
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UPE	Universal Primary Education

## **Section 1      Introduction**

ActionAid, one of the largest Northern NGOs headquartered in London, began its work in Ethiopia in 1988. Since then, it has been engaged in wide range of development activities ranging from directly implementing area-based integrated development programme to macro-level policy and advocacy. This paper examines ActionAid Ethiopia's (AAE) scaling up strategies on alternative approaches to the provision of basic education and analyzes the trajectory. It particularly focuses on examining the various mixes of strategies, their outcomes and factors that contributed to the success of scaling up.

### **1.1      Indication of Problem**

NGOs often test out new approaches and start small. Even when their initiatives become successful, they usually remain small, especially when compared to the scale of the challenges of poverty (Uvin, et al, 2000). Their success only becomes sustainable or reaches significant scale if they influence national development (Clark, 1991).

Despite the increasing number of NGOs, their enhanced understanding of the issues of poverty and growing engagement in a wider range of development activities, so far they could not able to bring about a far reaching impact and make a difference. Many countries are far behind to attain the MDGs. There are indications that NGOs' interventions are not strategically designed to make a significant difference beyond their operational areas. Though there are many small-scale NGOs-initiated good practices, they remain 'islands of success' unless they are scaled up (Edward and Hulme, 2002:53). And thus, scaling up—the expansion of impact beyond the local level—has to be an important concern for NGOs and development actors to bring about wider impact and make a difference.

There are a lot of NGOs in Ethiopia engaged in wide range of development activities. However, impacts of their intervention are, by and large, limited to their project areas. Like the experience in other parts of the world, scaling up of NGOs 'good practices' in a deliberate and strategic way, is very much limited among NGOs in Ethiopia.

### **1.2      Objective and Relevance of the Research**

Despite a laudable chorus calling for NGOs to scale up their effective initiatives, achievements are conspicuously small. AAE has been engaged in the delivery, advocacy and scaling up its 'good practice' in the area of alternative approach to basic education. The approach emerged from ActionAid international field-based experiences and referred to as *ACCESS* denoting Appropriate Cost-effective Centers for Education within the School Systems. This research examines how AAE went about the scaling up of *ACCESS* and the extent of its achievement. Subsequently, it draws lessons on key factors and mechanisms for scaling up NGOs 'good practices' and making a difference.

In Ethiopia, such experiences of scaling up NGOs' good practice and their studies are very limited. Thus, studying successful scaling up practices and analysis of their strategies is essential to draw up lessons and enhance the impact of NGOs. It also helps the wider NGO sector in Ethiopia by way of providing insights on the concepts of scaling up, its prospects and the strategies to be followed for wider impact and make a difference. The study also contributes to the academic body of knowledge by systematically documenting and analyzing the existing experience and sharing the knowledge.

### **1.3      Research Question/s**

To be an effective agent of poverty reduction, NGOs need to cast their eyes, beyond the structure in which their micro-work takes place. They need to plan scaling up their good practices (Fowler, 1997) for wider and significant impact. Specifically, the study addresses the following main and subsidiary questions:

- A. Main Research Questions:** Can NGOs make a difference? How and to what extent did ActionAid Ethiopia scale up its initiatives in alternative basic education in Ethiopia?
- B. Subsidiary Questions:** What was the ‘product’ scaled up and what are its unique features? How does the trajectory of scaling up look like? What strategies played key role to the scaling up? Who are the actors involved? Has it contributed to the wider development goal? Are there prospects for NGOs to scale up their ‘good practices’ and make a difference? What are the factors affecting scaling up?

#### **1.4 Research Methodology**

The call for NGOs to scale up their good practices is ultimately aimed at increasing the coverage in terms of people and geographic areas reached and solving the development problem under consideration. The study analyses and measures the strategies and their outcomes against the ultimate objective of scaling up, primarily, by the following two indicators: (A) As a process of increasing people and geographic areas reached by the intervention, and (B) As means of responding to the development problem. They stand as methodological pillars for the analysis and measurement of the scaling-up strategies and their outcomes. The analysis and measurement are based on data from primary and secondary sources, and the study generally employed qualitative approach.

**A. Primary Data:** Primary data has been collected from AAE and all its partner organizations using questionnaire. Moreover, interviews were conducted with key informants, at various levels, who have stake on the ABE. Broadly, senior staff of AAE, its partners (both government and non-government), policy makers and network and forum members and other major actors have been contacted and taken part in the interview. Those information constitute the main source of data for this study.

**B. Secondary Data:** Reviewing AAE’s project documents, periodic reports, review and evaluation reports, working strategies, policies and procedures and internal memos also constitute complementary sources of data for the study. Efforts were also made to review the policy and proclamation documents on education, decentralization and NGOs operation in Ethiopia. Finally, all the findings from various sources, as mentioned above, are analyzed in light of the conceptual and analytical framework discussed in chapter section two.

#### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

The issue of scaling up NGOs’ good practices is a relatively recent concept, which is not well developed with the changing roles of NGOs in development. Empirical studies and literature in this area are very limited (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 1997: vol. 2:27). Moreover, the success of scaling up depends on a number of factors and responds to contextual differences, which makes comparisons with those limited studies methodologically difficult. And thus, this study does not attempt to compare with other findings on scaling up of NGOs’ initiatives in different sector and other parts of the world.

Secondly, even though there is recognition that scaling up may take place with trade-offs and threats, this study doesn’t evaluate them. It would rather broadly reflect and touch upon those aspects as part of the discourse analysis.

Thirdly, this paper doesn’t intend to compare and contrast between the alternative and conventional approaches to basic education. Rather it briefly reflects the uniqueness of the alternative approach and its interactions with conventional approach. And thus, any conclusion to be drawn from this study should be aware of the nature of the scope of the data and analysis.

## **1.6 Structure of the Paper**

The paper is organized in five sections. The first section has provided insights on the objectives, relevance, methodology and limitations of the study followed by the second section which presents the conceptual and analytical framework of the study. Section three briefly discusses the background and situation of NGOs and basic education, followed by introduction of AAE's innovative response, *ACCESS*. Section four is exclusively devoted to analyzing the findings, the extent of achievement and factors for the success of scaling up of AAE's good practice in the arena of ABE. Finally, section five concludes by synthesizing the key findings and forwarding broad implications and calling for further research.

## **Section 2: Scaling Up NGOs' Good Practices: Conceptual and Analytical Framework**

Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a rapid proliferation of NGOs in development is observed. The growing role and importance of NGOs in development are recognized and supported by the political left and right (Bratton, 1989) though they view and justify their importance in different perspectives. Broadly, there is consensus and pragmatic argument that NGOs are contributing in the social development and improving the condition of the life of their target groups. Despite the increasing number of NGOs overtime, their engagement in wider range of development and increased reputation for their contribution in development, they could not bring a wider impact and difference. Edward and Hulme pointed that NGOs contribution to development on the global level remains limited. Their interventions are often limited in scale, fail to address the structural causes and often does not translate into sustainable national development programme (Edwards and Hulme, 1992:13).

It is a dominant view that NGOs impact is limited in scale and fails to change the structural and perpetuating causes of poverty. Besides, significant majority of the needy people have remained unreachable to NGOs, and also neither by government nor by market. Even in many project areas where NGOs reached, their impacts on the lives of the poor people is highly localized and often transitory. Edward and Hulme further argued that, in contrast to NGOs programmes, governmental development efforts are often large in scale but limited in their impact (Edward and Hulme, 1992:13).

In recent years, at least in the development circle, there is a growing chorus calling NGOs to increase the scale and impact of their activities and build strategic alliance so that impacts could be multiplied and the pool of beneficiaries increased exponentially (Dejong, 2003). Effective development work on a sustainable and significant scale is a goal which has eluded both governments and NGOs (Edwards and Hulme, 1992:13). Undoubtedly, NGOs have a comparative advantages to test out new initiatives and approaches over government which often tends to be bureaucratic, rigid and inefficient. However, unless those initiatives that started small and proven successful are shared and replicated, as Edward and Hulme call them, they remain 'islands of success'. The question is then "How can NGOs do more, scale up their impacts and make significant difference?"

### **2.1 Concepts and Strategies of Scaling up**

The term 'scaling-up' has different meaning in different contexts and development literature. Myers (1992:379-380) defines scaling-up as 'reaching as many people as possible with services or programmes' and further he made useful distinction between 'expansion, explosion and association'. 'Expansion' strategy is defined as the process of implementing a particular piloted and proved workable model in various geographic areas; 'explosion' referring a sudden large scale initiation of programmes without adequate organizational preparation and scanning the policy environment. However, the explosion strategy provides rooms for adapting the programme to local circumstances after launching the initiative. 'Association' symbolizes the spread of a programme through the joint efforts and alliances among a group of organizations where involved entities contextualized the programme to fit the specific context.



Another view by Mitlin and Satterthwaite (1992) refers successful NGOs as those organizations who ‘pull in’ a lot of resources rather than expanding the scale of their own service provision. Chambers (1992:40) extends the concept of scaling up by adding the notion of ‘self-spreading and self-improving strategies’. Chambers pointed out that the spread of an approach or method can be multiplicative through deliberate training or networking; or it can be diffusive, occurring informally and spontaneously; or it can be both (Chambers, 1992:40). Spreading can occur in several ways such as through training, individuals and informal channels of networks, publications and words of mouth. Chambers further noted that the diffusive aspect and impact of self-spreading are not results of deliberate efforts of the initiating organization, and are the neglected aspect often not accounted for in the evaluation.

Clark (1991:84), one of the first contributors to the concept, discusses the concept of scaling up broadly in relation to the strategies of addressing poverty and overcoming the local and international policy environment in order to make wider impact and differences. He makes distinction between ‘project replication’, ‘building grassroots movements’ and influencing policy reform’. He defines the terminologies as follows: project replication as increasing the outreach through its own programme and also helping others establish similar programmes on the basis of tested experience; building grassroots movement as increasing support for GROs who campaign for social change; and influencing policy reform as influencing local and international policies and practices that adversely affect the poor and grassroots development (Clark, 1991:84).

Furthermore, Howes and Sattar (1992:99-100) have echoed Clark’s work and make further distinction between organizational or programme growth (the ‘additive’ strategy) and spreading impact by transferring or catalyzing to other organization (the ‘multiplicative’ strategy). They further breakdown ‘additive’ strategies into replication and intensification sub-modalities of scaling up where each of them may take different strategic routes. Likewise, they breakdown the ‘multiplicative’ strategies into enabling the client-run institutions sustainably takeover and deliver the activity, and allow the initiating organization to withdraw and then re-deploy the resources saved elsewhere; and scaling up that takes place through collaborative provisions with government and other third party (Howes and Sattar, 1992:100).

In development literature, as Dejong synthesized, scaling up can be described as both ‘input’ and ‘output’ where ‘input’ refers to the organizational size and type of activities engaged, and ‘output’ refers to coverage of people or geographic area (Dejong, 2003:13).

**Table 1: Various definitions of Scaling Up used in the Development Literature**

<b>Input</b>	<b>Output</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding organizational size</li> <li>• Increasing the scale of activity engaged in</li> <li>• Integrating other activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching more people</li> <li>• Expanding geographic areas reached</li> <li>• Reaching other ‘target group’</li> <li>• Increasing the volume of output</li> <li>• Increasing intensity of impact within given geographic area or social group</li> </ul>

Source: Dejong, 2003:14

Broadly, the above mentioned various conceptions share the ultimate objective of scaling up, which are centered around increasing the numbers of people reached and the level of impact on the problem under consideration (Dejong, 2003).

Edwards and Hulme (2002:55) have summarized the various strategies and concepts on scaling up and grouped them into three main conceptual framework: (a) ‘additive strategies’ referring an increase in the size of the programme or organization, (b) ‘multiplicative strategies’ symbolizing an achievement in impact through deliberate influence, networking, training and policy and legal reform, which don’t necessarily imply self-growth, and (c) ‘diffusive strategies’ representing an informal and spontaneous spread of programme. The following table denotes a framework developed by Edwards and Hulme.

**Table 2: Analytical Framework-I for Scaling up**

<b>Scaling up Strategies</b>	<b>Additive:</b> (Self-expansion)	<b>Multiplicative:</b> (Partnership, Network, Alliance and Advocacy)	<b>Diffusion:</b> (Self-breeding)
<b>Conception</b>	Initiating organization expands its coverage (area/people)	Expansion of the service jointly with other actors; and spreading concepts, approach & technology through deliberate influencing, networking, training, and policy and legal reform efforts.	A spontaneous and informal spread of the programme without systematic and planned expansion by the initiator

Source: Edwards and Hulme, 2002:55

Dejong has put an effort to distil the various conception of scaling up, and very recently, come up with its own framework that particularly fits to examine the scaling up strategies in HIV/AIDS interventions (Dejong, 2003). It envisages five different types of strategies ranging in a continuum along which the original organization that initiates the scaling up efforts becomes less and less involved. The conceptual and analytical framework developed by Dejong is presented as follows:

**Table 3: Analytical Framework-II for Scaling up**

Strategies	Strategy 1: Organizational Expansion	Strategy 2: Catalyzing Role (Technical and Financial)	Strategy 3: Diffusion	Strategy 4: Influencing Policy	Strategy 5: Mainstreaming in Development
Objective/Actors					
Main Objectives	Expansion in geographic area, social group, and functions	Expand range of services via partnership with various actors	Spread: Concepts, Approach, & Technology	Influencing policy climate	Legitimize and carry out the activity as a regular program
Type of Organizations involved	Pioneer or organization that initiated scaling up	1. Government (as service provider) 2. Private sector 3. Other NGOs 4. CBOs	Any	1. Government 2. Donors 3. NGOs	All development institutions

Source: Dejong, 2003:48

The various scaling up strategies are not mutually exclusive, in some cases, their boundaries are not clear. In certain instances, they appear in relatively combined form while in other time, stand exclusively. The adoption of specific scaling up strategy depends on various factors such as the nature of the activity, cost, organizational capacity, the objective of scaling up and sustainability potential of the activity.

## 2.2 Considerations for the Success of Scaling up

Clark has attempted to broadly project the appropriateness and effectiveness of the various strategies in relation to the specific scenarios (Clark, 1991:84). He suggested to follow the project replication strategy where the situation is characterized by: (a) NGO resources are plentiful; (b) institutions and government are weak or government is autocratic and there is no room for influencing policy; (c) the major causes of the problem is not related to local elites; and (d) there is strong community leadership. Likewise, building grassroots movements is advised under the conditions where (a) poverty is exacerbated by traditional social and institutional factors; (b) there is perception of exploitation and injustice by local elites; (c) there is potential allies of GROs; and (d) there is limited scope for free

informal assembly of the poor people. Clark further suggested that influencing policy reform could be effective under the conditions where: (a) effective and participatory development is possible; (b) government recognizes and respect the contribution of NGOs; (c) the poor welcome efforts to seek reforms; and (d) the NGO/s have the competence needed for policy dialogue (Clark, 1991:85-86). He also notes that the above three strategies are not mutually exclusive, nor the boundaries are clear.

Edwards and Hulme pointed that there is no straightforward answer to the question of how to enhance the developmental impact of NGOs (Edwards and Hulme, 1992:211). Further, Dejong indicates that though the recognition of the importance of scaling up of NGOs work is increasing, much less is shared about conducive context for scaling up, the type of organization or programme activities that are most appropriate for scaling up, the relative cost and uniqueness of the programme compared with others, the internal implications of scaling up, the extent of impact of scaling up and its trade-offs and the local socio-political dynamics of scaling up (Dejong, 2003).

Organizations may employ a mix of or any of the strategies, depending on the specific context and may have strong rationale for aping one or another. However, the success of scaling up is not only determined by the right choice of one or combination of scaling up strategies, but also various other factors. A number of factors can influence the development impact of NGOs. In recent years, there is a growing recognition that NGOs need to abandon moving away from governments and working independently. Rather, in order to make wider impact, they should establish strategic alliance with government, despite the tension and political difficulties on both sides (Dejong, 2003). Fowler emphasized that the comparative advantages of NGOs, in scaling up lies more in the quality of their relationships to various development actors than the size of their resources they command (Fowler, 1991). He further argued that many of wider impacts are determined by the relationship between the NGO sector and the state. However, in a number of countries, NGOs are weak or play more of an oppositional rather than operational role and governments are highly suspicious of them (Clark, 1991).

Working with government, as Edward and Hulme (2002:56) pointed, is a strategy to foster more appropriate and effective policies and practices, which will eventually be of benefit to poorer and less powerful people. It is critical that official policies and programmes respond to the needs and priorities of the individuals and community organizations who generate the demand for most services (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992:177).

The other important factors that limit scaling up NGOs' work is the failure of linkage between their micro-level programme and wider policy, system and structure (Edwards and Hulme, 2002:62-63, Edwards and Hulme, 1992:13). As David points out, most NGOs forget the structural problem and macro context that hinder wider development impacts and continuously reproduce problems for community development (David, 1992:139). Failure of NGOs to recognize the link between their micro work with the wider socio-economic and political system and structural problems seriously affects the scaling up of their impacts. It is also important for NGOs who engage in advocacy to capitalize and link their advocacy theme with the micro-level experiences. The strong link helps the initiating organization to concretize and legitimize their claim on behalf of the poor and their grassroots organizations that are situated far from actors affecting them and are not organized and powerful to challenge them.

Networks, forums and partnership are avenues through which members or partners can learn from each other. Apart from facilitating exchange of information and analyzing particular policy matters among the members, they are valuable instruments for scaling up NGOs works (Korten, 1990). It is difficult, if not impossible, for NGOs to make significant difference without bringing various actors under one umbrella and commonly shared mission and objectives. Since NGOs band together, impact can be achieved through common programmes and common stands on a wide range of issues and scale (David, 1992:139).

David also pointed that NGOs work would be relegated to 'gap filling' if NGOs do not try to link their activities to the larger issues of structures and system (David, 1992:145). To maximize impact, NGOs need to work with advocacy groups and/or engage in lobbying and advocacy at local, national and global levels. David further extends his argument that the successes of development NGOs are not sustainable if they do not result in policy changes through lobbying and advocacy. As Edward and Hulme

(2002:60) pointed out, advocacy, in the north, as a scaling up and influencing instrument, has emanated from the premise that the causes of underdevelopment lie in the political and economic structures of an unequal world.

On the other hand, in the course of scaling up, the relationship between coverage, impact, cost and quality are dynamic. It should be noted that a programme that increases its scale in terms of coverage might compromise and lose its registered impact as it overspread its efforts and may reduce its intensity (Edward and Hulme 1992, 2002:71). Also with expansion, changes in culture, structure and accountabilities occurred. As each strategy has comparative advantage over the other and suitability to specific contextual settings, initiating organizations should consider the specificity and the cost-benefit analysis while planning scaling up.

Though experiences are not substantially documented and widely shared, there are notable indications that NGOs can achieve wider impact. Their good practices can possibly scaled up as mainstream development programme. Though there are different approaches of scaling up, the challenge is placing an approach that allows a qualitative, decentralized and participatory approach, in contrast with the more quantitative, centralized and imposed approach that seems predominant and technocratic (Myers, 1992).

### 2.3 Analytical Framework of the Study

In this research, the concept of scaling-up, broadly refers to its ultimate objective as the process of increasing the coverage in terms of people and geographic areas reached by the programme and the extent of its contribution in addressing the development problem under consideration. Having discussed the various conceptions and strategies of scaling up, this research has slightly modified the frameworks reflected above and adopted its own that best fits and systematically captures wide range of strategic routes in scaling up *ACCESS*. It also makes the analysis to be clearer and helps readers to easily understand the strategies and trajectories. The following is the proposed analytical framework for this study.

**Table 4:** Analytical Framework for the study

Scaling up Strategies	Self-expansion	Partnership with NGOs, Networking and Forums	Working in partnership with government	Self-breeding	Lobbying and advocacy	Mainstreaming
Conception	Increasing coverage (Geographic and people) by the initiating organization itself.	Expansion of the programme through joint implementation with other NGOs and promotion of networks and forums,	Partnership with government in the intension of influencing policies and expanding coverage.	Spontaneous and informal spread of the program without systematic and planned expansion by the initiator.	Influencing governments to issue and enact pro-poor public policy and legislatives.	Incorporating into the mainstream national and/or local development plans,

In addition to the above analytical framework, factors for the success of scaling up will be analyzed in light of the factors and considerations discussed under section 2.2 of this section.

### **Section 3:       Situational Analysis of NGOs and Basic Education in Ethiopia**

This section briefly discusses about the situation of NGOs and their evolutionary growth from relief oriented support to service delivery and advocacy. It will be followed by analysis of the status of primary education and the emergence of alternative basic education in Ethiopia.

#### **3.1       Background and Status of NGOs in Ethiopia**

Consistent to the development objectives, cooperation among the various development actors becomes a necessity to effectively address and respond to the development problem. NGOs are one of the growing actors and agents of development with accumulated substantial experience in development works at micro and macro levels.

##### **3.1.1   NGOs' Operation in Ethiopia**

In the Ethiopian context, the emergence and participation of non-state actors in development, is dated back and related to the ancient religious institutions. The historical track records on the emergence and spread of the present form of registered and legally formed NGOs in Ethiopia indicate that NGOs are relatively a recent phenomenon. During the Imperial regime (pre 1974), organized forms of associations were regarded as a threat to the legitimacy and authority of the patriarchal emperor (Wolde Michael, 1999:36). Philanthropic activities were very much encouraged to relate to and channel through religious institutions.

During the military regime (1974 – 1991), Ethiopia was characterized as a country with violation of human right and undemocratic government. Due to the ideological choice the country had followed, it was denied access to development fund from the western block and the assistance was mainly humanitarian. Such aid used to be channeled through northern NGOs. The proliferation of NGOs in Ethiopia is associated with the 1973/74 and 1983/84 major famines (CRDA, 2003:iii). Significant numbers of northern NGOs have come to Ethiopia to provide humanitarian services, and help the famine victims, mainly through food aid.

Though formally registered NGOs have appeared late in the 1960s (CRDA, 2003:iii), their role in development have been expanding, particularly since the 1970s and 1980s international economic and political crisis. In the 1970s and 1980s, states in developing countries, began to be seen as the central problem behind the crisis and failure of development (Macintosh, 1992). Proponents of the interventionist role of government in development and service delivery, argued to justify such roles by government on the basis that market doesn't serve all, and thus those left out by market need to be served by government and CSOs, including NGOs. Those arguments have created conducive environment for the expansion and increased role of NGOs in development. Subsequently, huge portion of foreign aid funds started to be channeled through NGOs (Hawthorne, 1993).

Since 1991, after the downfall of the military regime, wide varieties of NGOs emerged and their number increased exponentially, particularly that of national (southern) NGOs. The number of formally registered national NGOs has been only seven until 1990. The internal and external factors have favored for the expansion of NGOs after 1991. The number of registered NGOs has significantly increased from 21 in 1992 to 1120 as of March 2003 (CRDA, 2003:iii).

Overtime, the importance of NGOs in delivering services, empowering the community and influencing policies is increasingly recognized. A close observation indicates that there is a progressive transition in the role and functions of NGOs, moving from relief and rehabilitation to various development activities and lobbying and advocacy. Their experiences have began to be recognized in the national development strategies and influence policies that constrain people to participate and benefit from development.

### 3.1.2 State-NGOs Relationship in Ethiopia

One of the factors which affect the relations between the NGOs and state in Ethiopia, like many other African countries, is the fact that both depend on external aid. Furthermore, since the 1980s' social and economic crisis and the imposition of structural adjustment programmes, real power in Africa is exercised by powerful external agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF. Accordingly, the idea of strong African national societies based on the balance between state and civil society suffers from funding and depends on transnational interventions and influences (Lewis, 2002:577). Hence, the recent civil societies and NGOs agendas are mainly promoted by external actors and donors and must be seen in the broader context of global economic and political restructuring in general and structural adjustment in particular (Rahimeto, 2002:103).

Different government and non-government development actors view the roles and objectives of NGOs differently. At one end of the spectrum, NGOs are viewed as 'gap fillers', providing services that the government cannot offer, while at the other end they are viewed as effective agent in building the democratic society. Still on other side of the spectrum, some view NGOs as supporters of opposition political parties while others again expect them to implement government programmes without questioning its rationality (British Council, 2004).

Despite improvements in recent years, Ethiopia remains a long way from a state in which civil society organizations can operate in harmony with government. Even today, the law on the formation and legalization of CSOs and NGOs, issued in 1966, is still unchanged and characterized by several constraints for the effective participation of NGOs as effective agents of development. Nevertheless, as stated above, the number, functions and geographic coverage of NGOs have significantly increased overtime, particularly since 1991. Though the attitudes and perception of government officials towards the role of NGOs are positively changing, it should also be noted that this was not unanimous.

## 3.2 Formal and Alternative Approaches to Basic Education in Ethiopia

This sub-section discusses the overall situation of primary and basic education in Ethiopia. It also briefly examines the introduction of the alternative approach to basic education and its contribution to the problem of lack of access to basic education.

### 3.2.1 An Overview of the Education Structure and Primary Education

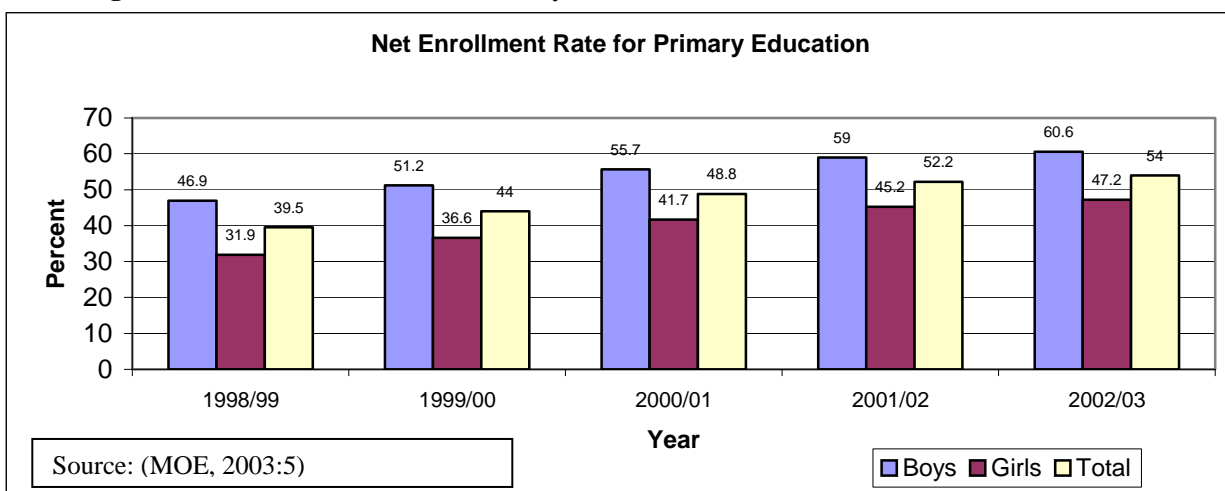
Ethiopia has undergone changes in its long-standing national education sector policy. The New Education and Training Policy along with its strategy is adopted and a uniform structure of general education, which is the 10+2 system has been introduced since 1994. As part of the decentralization policy reform, the regional and local governments are mandated for the design, implementation and overall management of primary education (grade 1-8), secondary (grade 9 – 10), technical and vocational education training (TVET), non-formal and teacher education in their respective regions and localities. The structure of education is presented as follows:

**Table 5:** The Structure of Education in Ethiopia

Structure	Primary Education (Formal)		Adult and Non- formal Education	Secondary Education	TVET	Preparatory	Tertiary Education
Grades	First cycle (1 – 4) (Referred to as Basic Education)	Second Cycle (5 – 8)	Literacy/numeracy, functional education for adult and alternative basic education to children	9 – 10	2 years TVET after secondary education	2 years preparatory education after secondary school	2 to 6 years higher education after preparatory education

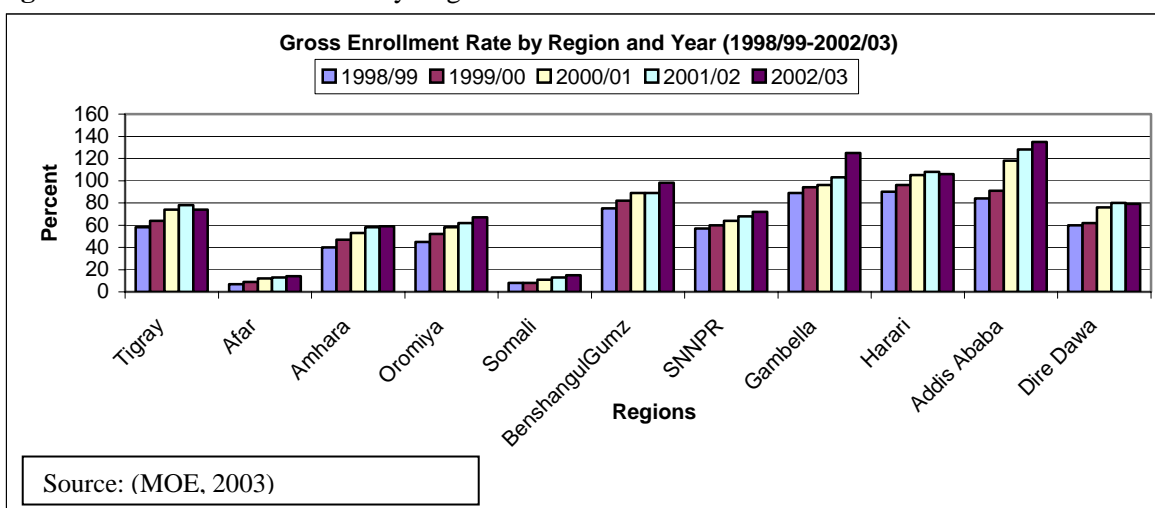
Despite the efforts by government to access basic education to children at various levels, donors are increasingly assisting and a number of NGOs are taking part in the delivery and promotion of basic education. In 2002, only 54% (7 million) of the eligible group (referred to as primary school-aged children i.e. 7 – 14 years of age) have accessed basic education (MOE, 2003:5). Over 6 million school-age children were out-of-school in 2002/03 and the large majority of these children were girls.

**Figure 1: Net Enrolment Rate for Primary Education**



In 2002/2003, the gross enrollment rate (GER)<sup>1</sup> was 64.4% with great disparity between boys (74.6%) and girls (53.8%) and between regions i.e. 14% and 135% in Afar and Addis Ababa regions respectively (MOE, 2003).

**Figure 2: Gross Enrollment Rate by Regions and Years**



On top of low enrollment rate and the mismatch between the prevailing formal schools and the growing rate of population, the Ethiopian education sector is broadly characterized by a range of complex problems. These includes: high drop-out and repetition rates, poor quality of education, lack of text books

<sup>1</sup> GER refers to as the percentage of total enrollment in primary school, irrespective of the age limit, divided by primary school-age children (age between 7–14) both in- and out-of-school. And thus, GER can be more than 100%.

and teaching materials, inadequate and poorly equipped school facilities, highly congested classrooms, shortage of trained teachers, inequity in access (gender, rural/urban, regional) to education, weak educational planning and management, low investment in education and low participation of communities in basic education are the major ones (MOE, 2003).

The sluggish expansion of primary education in the formal and conventional approach, in the face of the tripling demand for basic education, suggests that it is difficult if not impossible to reach millions of out-of-school children and attain UPE or EFA by 2015, i.e. one of the MDGs, without additional drastic measures. The Ethiopian government ratified the Dakar declaration in 2000 and committed to achieve UPE by 2015 and gender equity at primary education level by 2005. However, declaration alone would simply make the failure bigger.

Policy makers and development actors are therefore required to turn every stone to meet these challenges. A ray of hope in this rather grim circumstance is sparked by the possibility of providing basic education through an alternative approach. This is the line of responses followed by ActionAid Ethiopia (AAE). Its emergence, maturity and characteristics will be briefly discussed in the following sections.

### **3.2.2 The Emergence and Growth of Alternative Basic Education**

The failure of the conventional approach to basic education is resulted in the denial of access to basic education to millions of children in Ethiopia. The huge unserved portion of school-age children, the rapid growth of population and escalating cost of building and running formal schools have demanded development actors to look for alternative approaches to basic education. Consequently, education planners, policy makers, researchers, international NGOs as well as the World Bank and UNESCO began to seek innovative and less-costly alternative approaches to basic education (MOE, 2000:6).

The situation has led to the development of alternative approaches in the delivery of basic education in various parts of the developing countries. Overtime, those approaches emerged as important basic education delivery systems and their vitalities have been recognized and valued, particularly due to their attributes of low-cost, simplicity for rapid coverage and relevance to meet the growing demand for basic education.

AAE is a pioneer NGO to introduce ABE, in the name of NFE to children, which later on transformed into *ACCESS*, in Ethiopia. *ACCESS*, an innovative alternative approach to basic education is adopted by AAE to avail basic education to the disadvantaged out-of-school children. Initially, the programme was designed as oversimplified literacy and numeracy programme to children without proper syllabi, curriculum and link with formal education system. However, with maturity, it redesigned itself and become a strategic undertaking for AAE that fits in and complements the formal education system. Though different NGOs run AAE's *ACCESS* with slightly different features and name, they all commonly share the same objective i.e. providing basic education to out-of-school children in an alternative, flexible and lower cost approach.

### **3.3 An Overview AAE's Initiative on Alternative Basic Education**

ActionAid is an international, UK-based non-governmental development organization dedicated to work with the poor and marginalized to eradicate absolute poverty and realize social equity in collaboration with pro-poor partners. In Ethiopia, ActionAid started its operation in 1988/89. The organization views poverty as multidimensional deprivations of basic needs and rights, and believes that it can be addressed by integrated and various levels of interventions, from micro to macro, and through concerted efforts of various actors.

AAE has been engaged in supporting various activities in education sector as part of its wide range development strategies. Among its engagement in education sector, the delivery and promotion of *ACCESS*, standing for Appropriate Cost-effective Centers of Education within the School System, is central and one of the priority themes of its policy and advocacy engagement.



### 3.3.1 ACCESS: AAE-initiated Alternative Approach to Basic Education

During its initial stage, 1991 – 1995, *ACCESS* did not envisage to strategically link itself with the formal school system. It rather emphasized just to avail basic education for the disadvantaged children without adequate considerations of compatibility and linkage. In the course of the trajectory of its growth, the then NFE had gone through several transformations before achieving its present features. Originally, the present *ACCESS* used to be named Non-Formal Education (NFE) and was distinguished as simplified ‘literacy programme’ without curriculum, syllabus, link to formal school. It did not have defined knowledge and skills requirement on facilitators and teaching methodology. Those characteristics describe the features of the programme, particularly during 1991 – 1993 (Mohammed, 2001:17).

On the basis of programme review and evaluation, *ACCESS/NFE* had exhibited and incorporated the following major improvements during 1994 – 1996:

- Approaching, involving and participating government education offices at various levels since 1993 and 1994,
- Clearly defining community’s role and responsibilities in the management of *ACCESS* since 1994,
- Minimum Learning Continuum (MLC) which is the curriculum of *ACCESS* in 1994,
- Minimum Learning Outcome (MLO) and syllabi which is the breakdown of MLC in 1994,
- Guideline for training of trainers and facilitators and teaching methodology in 1994 and 1995,

On ActionAid’s International Workshop on Children Education, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 1996, diverse experiences on the delivery and characteristics of ABE were presented and shared by all ActionAid country programmes. Though their basic features in terms of aim, objectives, principles and challenges were broadly similar, the workshop has recognized and acknowledged differences in naming, contextual diversities and specificities of the ABE.

Subsequently, on the basis of the agreed and common characteristics of presented ABE modalities, the workshop redefined the direction and came up with a new acronym *ACCESS* that applies to all NFE to children across ActionAid. Until then, those programmes were parallel to the formal education system and weakly designed approaches to basic education. Since 1996, *ACCESS* has redressed and denoted as an alternative approach to basic education for children with the following characteristics:

#### **Box 1: The Essence of ACCESS**

*ACCESS* (Appropriate Cost-effective Centers for Education within School System)

**Conception:** It is an approach to the provision of basic education:

- ⇒ To socially and economically disadvantaged children, particularly girls,
- ⇒ At extremely lower cost,
- ⇒ Through flexible outreach education centers,
- ⇒ That act as feeder and satellite centers to the formal 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle primary education school, and
- ⇒ Involves the community as owner and manager of the programme,

**Aim:** *ACCESS* aims at alleviating the problem of access to basic education to the disadvantaged out-of-school children by establishing cost-effective, flexible, easily accessible and community-based education centers that are linked with and effectively serve as satellites or feeders to formal higher primary schools.

**Objectives:** Broadly, its objective is to contribute to the achievement of Education For All (EFA) by promoting and linking *ACCESS* with formal education system. Specifically, it targets to:

- ⇒ Promote the provision of a condensed three-years basic education package (which is equivalent to four-years primary education in the formal school) to 7 – 14 year old children, who lack access to the formal school, that can either serve as a basis for further learning or improved life,
- ⇒ Increase access to and participation of girls in basic education,
- ⇒ Make basic education system more responsive to the specific needs of those children and communities and accessible in a sustainable manner.

**Guiding Principles:** *ACCESS* is expected to follow and ensure the following:

- ⇒ Relevance of the curriculum,
- ⇒ Flexibility of the programme,
- ⇒ Wider participation of community and other stakeholders, (particularly, towards community owned & managed)
- ⇒ Cost-effectiveness (low capital and running cost),
- ⇒ Linkage and complementarities with formal school system,
- ⇒ Gender equity,
- ⇒ Children/student centered approach,
- ⇒ Accessibility,
- ⇒ Sustainability,

### 3.3.2 The Uniqueness of *ACCESS* in Relation to the Formal Primary Education

The summarized characteristics of *ACCESS*, ActionAid's brand to an alternative approach to basic education and its uniqueness in comparison with the co-prevailing formal 1<sup>st</sup> cycle primary school are presented below:

**Table 6:** Relative Comparisons between of *ACCESS* and Formal Primary Education

Major component	Characteristics/features	Comparison with formal primary schools
Accessibility	Takes education to the disadvantaged children within and up to 20 minute walking distance,	Schools normally cover children within and up to 2 hours walking distance
Simplicity and possibility of wider coverage in short period & lower cost	Fully depends on local resources: can be run by community capacity, man power from locality and can reach large majority of children within short period of time,	May be beyond community capacity, construction takes long period, reach smaller children at a time, much more expensive than the ABE.
Students size	Up to 50 students in a classroom, 7 – 14 age children, but flexible Girls constitute more than 45% in 2002/03,	Mostly more than 100 in a classroom, 7 – 14 age children, but flexible Girls constitute 41% in 2002/03
Teacher/facilitator profile & qualification	Village resident, 8 <sup>th</sup> grade complete or above, (even lower, but preference to the higher grade), Women constitute > 70% in 2002/03, Part-time employees, Recruited and selected by the community.	Mostly outsider, 12 <sup>th</sup> grade complete + one year training in Teachers Training Institute, Women constitute < 40% in 2002/03, Full-time employee, Recruited & assigned by government.
Teachers (facilitators) Training	15 days basic training and 3 – 5 days refresher training on quarterly basis,	One year training from teachers training institutes
Community Participation	Community-led (site selection, center construction/maintenance & management, academic calendar and schedule, facilitators recruitment & monitoring, local material and labor contribution, mobilizing community etc).	Government-led programme, very limited participation and involvement of community,
Instructional structure and schedule	Three-years program, but covers the four-years formal primary education (grade 1 – 4) curriculum, localized and flexible academic time table, 6 days/week, integrated life-skill and locally adopted curriculum	Four-years programme (Grade 1 – 4), Rigid, non-consultative time table, 5 day/week Fairly integrated, but centrally designed curriculum
Required land size (construction site)	At least 80 or more square meter	Standardized, up to 15,000 square meter
Class room environment	Student-center, practical learning, facilitators encourage self and group learning, regrouping and reclassification and differential treatment for each category, no corporal punishment	Teacher-center, no regrouping and no differential treatment, application of corporal punishment
Repetition Rate	As low as 4% in 2001/02 and 2% in 2002/03 in almost all project areas	10% in 2001/02 and 7% in 2002/03
Dropout Rate	Varies within the range of 5% – 10% annually	16% in 2000/01, and 17% in 2001/02

Parallel to the promotion of *ACCESS*, AAE supports and strengthen the capacity of 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle formal primary education so that they can absorb children transferring from *ACCESS* to the formal schools. The intervention reduces the potential tension between the alternative and conventional approaches, strengthens and reinforces the link between *ACCESS* and the formal education system. In other words, AAE followed the direction where *ACCESS* performs as a feeder and satellite centers for the formal education system. Its scaling up and contribution to the solution will be discussed in depth in the following sections.

## **Section 4: Analysis of Scaling up Strategies, contribution to the MDGs and Factors for success**

As seen above, in the conceptual and analytical framework, the success of scaling up is determined by a number of factors. This section examines and discusses the scaling up strategies adopted by AAE and the extent of scaling up in relation to addressing the development problem, and the geographic coverage and size of the target group accessing the service. The empirical findings of the study will be analyzed in light of the conceptual and analytical framework presented in section two. The analysis is classified under two blocks: analyzing the scaling up strategies and their outcomes, and key factors for the success of scaling up NGOs' good practices.

### **4.1 AAE's Scaling up Strategies and Contribution to the MDGs**

To be effective agents of poverty reduction and make a difference, NGOs should look beyond their target areas of work and plan a wider coverage to be implemented by similar establishments or the state itself (Fowler, 1997). The extent of the problem in the denial of basic education to millions of Ethiopian children, particularly rural children and girls, is the driving force for AAE to engage into the delivery and scaling up of *ACCESS* programme. Furthermore, AAE believes that the expansion and adoption of *ACCESS* approach could be a breakthrough in the Ethiopian education system in achieving one of the MDGs, UPE by 2015.

The search for the trajectory of scaling up of AAE's initiative in alternative approach to basic education has broadly adopted six scaling up strategies and routes: (a) self-expansion, (b) partnership with national NGOs, networking and forums, (c) partnership with government, (d) self-breeding, (e) lobbying and advocacy, and (f) mainstreaming. Each strategy and their strategic routes will be discussed, as follows:

#### **4.1.1 Self-Expansion**

This strategy, Myers (1992) calls it 'expansion', focuses on the instruments used for increasing outreach, in terms of geographic and population coverage, by the initiating institution. AAE has first tested out *ACCESS* programme in its first development area named *Dalocha*, in *Siltie* zone of SNNP region in 1991. *ACCESS*, in its initial stage, was distinguished as simplified literacy programme without systematic curriculum, syllabus and defined teaching methodology. In the first stage of programme introduction and scaling up which covers 1991 – 1995, *ACCESS* did not transform its characteristics much, but grew from pilot stage to full fledged activity as one component of the IDP. The growth is accompanied by accessing basic education to increased number of out-of-school children in a different geographic setting *Mareka Wereda*<sup>2</sup>, *Dawro* zone, SNNPR through direct implementation by AAE. *ACCESS*, in its initial stage, without clear setting of its long-term goal, was mainly managed and run by AAE, in its two project areas and with relatively less participation of community and government.

In an arrangement where AAE plays a lead and dominant role in all stages of the process, *ACCESS* has been started in five centers. It has been carried under tree-shades, community-halls and thatched roof classrooms and availed itself to 250 out-of-school children in the first year of the programme introduction. At the end of the third year (1993), the number of *ACCESS* centers expanded geographically (in and outside of the project area) reaching to 15 from 8 centers in second year. In the mean time, the number of students increased from 400 to 1500. However, community's involvement in the planning and administration of the programme has gradually increased overtime.

Community's appreciation and respond to the programme has highly encouraged AAE to increase the programme outreach through increased participation of community. Deliberate actions were taken to strategically and systematically engage the community in all stages and processes of the programme implementation. In 1994, AAE replicated *ACCESS* programme in its second direct operational

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<sup>2</sup> *Wereda* refers to as the second higher-level administrative boundary in the local language *Amharic*.

development area, *Mareka Wereda*, *Dawuro* zone, the then *North Omo* zone, SNNPR. The second project has considered lessons from earlier project and started with 15 *ACCESS* centers. 1315 out-of-school children, 690 boys and 625 girls, had the opportunity to attend basic education in those *ACCESS* centers. The program grew rapidly, and 2057 children could access basic education in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the program up from 1855 during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Like its ancestor project in *Dalocha*, *ACCESS*, in *Mareka Wereda*, had faced serious challenges by governments at various levels while the community appreciated it.

During the course of its growth, *ACCESS* has registered practice-based incremental progress in terms of the content and delivery mechanisms. In view of ensuring sustainability and transferring ownership to the primary stakeholders, AAE has continuously struggled to involve community and government to take part in program implementation in subsequent period of program introduction. It has quickly attracted communities' interest as the demand for basic education was so high. For instance, the GER of *Dalocha* was 6.7% with extremely low (3.3%) girl's participation in 1994 (Mohammed, 2001:14). On the other hand, governments, at all levels, were not enthusiastic and did not value the initiative beyond its potential contribution to enable children read and write. Though various attempts were made by AAE to involve the local government and education office, it was not welcomed as the initiative was viewed as inferior and sub-standardized product and potentially contradictory to the conventional approach. At times, governments even used to put pressure and warn AAE to shut down the project.

AAE has invested a lot to make local governments understand and support the programme. Continuous awareness creation, invitation to programme review workshops and project visit arrangements have taken place to sensitize and even show the complementarity of *ACCESS* to the formal basic education system. Viewing *ACCESS* as an approach that downgrades the formal education was a dominant view by government officials. For this reason, many formal schools used to equate *ACCESS* students in grade one, irrespective of the number of years they attended in *ACCESS* centers. The unwillingness of the education bureaus and offices, at various levels, to standardize the equivalent conversion of *ACCESS* programme in the formal education system has become a disincentive and disappointing factor to the children, their parents and AAE.

However, AAE has continued to persuade local governments to create an understanding and system that considers *ACCESS* as a feeder and satellite centers to the second-cycle primary education. As the relationship start to improve between the project implementers and local government officials, the concerned government officials get involved in the process. Though not formally and firmly, they eventually started to appreciate and value *ACCESS* as useful approach that can reach significant portion of out-of-school children at low cost and in simple, flexible and short period of time. Though they recognized the importance and valuable contribution of *ACCESS*, and sporadic appreciation have been exhibited at local government levels, no systematic, uniform and formal acceptance could be achieved until recent years. Clark suggests that under conditions where institutions and government are weak or government is autocratic and the room for influencing is slim, NGOs need to follow self-expansion strategy to scale up their work (Clark 1991:84). AAE, at early stage of *ACCESS*, has followed the self-expansion route as Clark argued for under such similar conditions.

Furthermore, to institutionalize the delivery modality and make *ACCESS* as community-based programme, the roles and responsibilities of the community, as represented by the parents committee, were defined as follows:

- Identifying appropriate sites,
- Providing land for *ACCESS* center establishment and playground,
- Providing local materials for centers establishment,
- Mobilization & raising community's awareness to send their children to the centers,
- Determining the duration and time of instruction,
- Recruitment, supervision and monitoring of facilitators,
- Managing the centers through their committee,
- Contributing money for facilitators' payment and so on.

Likewise, though not firmly and formally, monitoring *ACCESS* and facilitating linkage to the formal system were set as roles of local government, as represented by *Wereda* education department. During the process, the parent committee has shown great interest and contribution for the continuity and strength of the programme while the local governments were very much suspicious about the quality of the programme, AAE's intension and hidden agendas behind the programme. The approach was quite different from the traditional way of doing things by NGOs, which in most cases tend to be capital intensive by nature.

The incremental improvements of the programme in terms of the content, classroom size and quality and delivery modalities have continued. It is in line with Fowler's (1988) argument that the quality of delivery system, the content of the programme, relationship with beneficiaries and other stakeholder kept changing as expansion occurred. In 1994 and 1995, *ACCESS* has quickly improved itself by incorporating field-based learning and taking into account strategic concerns and values.

As of end of 2003, well over 3000 children have been attending basic education in *Dalocha* and *Mareka Weredas*, each. Out of the total 77,854 school-age children, in 2003, 8.7% has been covered by *ACCESS* and contributed to raise the GER by 20.2%, in average, in those project areas.

**Table 7: Contribution of *ACCESS* in GER and girl's participation<sup>3</sup>: AAE-managed projects in 2003**

Project area	Number of children attending in <i>ACCESS</i> centers	% Share of girls	% Share of GER
AAE direct operational			
<i>Dalocha</i>	3387	44%	18%
<i>Mareka</i>	3407	49%	22%

In 1996, AAE concretized lessons and laid down ground-works for the current characteristic and features of *ACCESS*, as shown in section 3.3.1 above, and further scaling up via partnership and other strategies.

#### 4.1.2 Partnership with National NGOs, Networking and Forums

Dejong (2002:49) refers this strategy as 'catalyzing others' and defines it as deliberate efforts to work with other organizations in order to influence the nature and scope of the service provisions while Edwards and Hulme (2002) broadly categorize this route under 'multiplicative strategies'. Working in partnership with local NGOs was a strategic choice for AAE to gain collective voice and advocate for pro-poor policies for wider impact. AAE, as a learning organization, didn't take long time to review and strategically set the scaling up plan. It consolidated its experiences, and documented the relative strength and uniqueness of *ACCESS* as part of preparation for partnership engagement and sharing and influencing purposes.

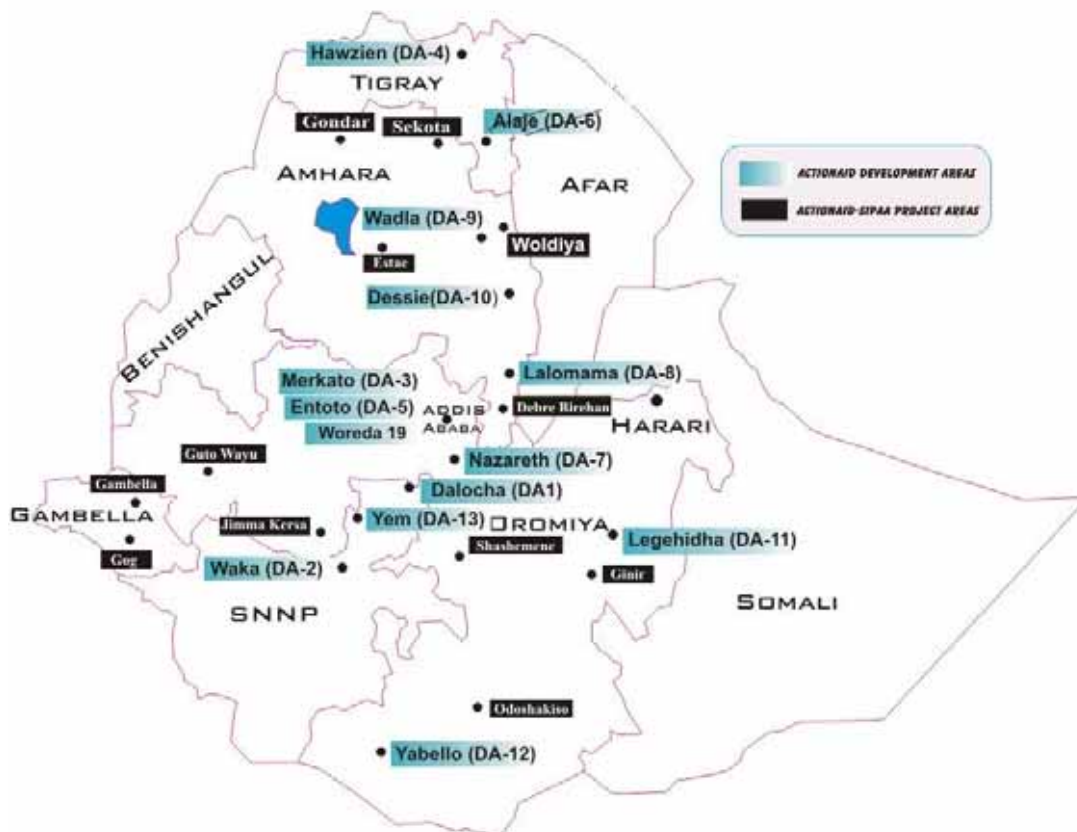
The relative success of and learning from direct field experience have provided leverage for AAE to take off and build confidence to scale up *ACCESS* via partnership with national NGOs. Since 1996, AAE began engaging in partnership with various national NGOs to work together and expand its outreach in rural and urban disadvantaged areas. Though AAE has strategic interest to work directly with pre-existed CBOs, the status and capacity of CBOs were found either weak or inappropriate in most target areas. And thus, it has pursued to scale up *ACCESS* model through partnership with national NGOs.

The self-implementation experience has helped AAE to hold a strong position in arena of NFE. Besides, its micro-level engagement has become a strong learning ground for the new partners and other development actors and basis for advocacy work. Partner national NGOs developed confidence to run *ACCESS* after visiting AAE's direct operational programmes and sharing experiences. They found the

<sup>3</sup> The statistics doesn't consider those children attending basic education in *ACCESS* centers run by other actors and also scaled up through self-breeding strategy.

initiative as simple, flexible, cost effective, community-friendly and replicable. Since 1996, AAE, in collaboration with its eleven national partner NGOs, has scaled up *ACCESS* to sixteen project areas-*Weredas*, in the largest and populated five regional states out of the total nine in Ethiopia.

**Map 1: AAE and Partners NGOs Project Area Map<sup>4</sup>**



During the time of expansion through partners NGOs, lessons from local and international levels have been taken into account and fixed into the structure and delivery of *ACCESS*. Like the first two AAE-managed projects, the greatest challenge to partners was governments' attitude, at various levels, that view *ACCESS* as an approach that downgrades the formal primary education. However, breaking the traditional attitude of local government officials and persuading them to look beyond the conventional approach was so difficult at the initial stage.

Despite the fact that the formal system could not reach those disadvantaged and remote areas, governments, particularly at federal and regional levels, had strong resistance and objection to the expansion of *ACCESS*. It was not in the recognition of the importance of the ABE and the failure of the formal system that governments initially tolerated the implementation of ABE by NGOs. Rather, just considering the programme as harmless 'NGOs business'. And thus, *ACCESS* continued without recognition and technical and policy support from government side until 2002. By then, reasonable clarities were formed in terms of its linkage to the formal school. Partners, among other things, have paid attention to involve the community and local government in all stages of the process. The growing community participation in the planning, administration and decision making on the programme and

<sup>4</sup> Except "Woreda 19" and "Yem", the gray-marked spots represent project areas where AAE-supported *ACCESS* programme as of 2003. Three AAE's partners project areas included in this study are not shown in the map. These are ADA, FCE and EMRDA. For further detail about their project areas, see list of the AAE's partners in Annex 4.

*ACCESS*'s students appreciation, have overtime increased its acceptance, formally and informally, both by the community and local governments.

The successfulness of the programme and great interest and appreciation of the community, in due courses, have called government officials' attention to closely look at the programme. Continuous efforts such as organizing awareness creation and sensitization workshops and field visits, invitation to review and experience sharing workshops and reporting performance are made by partners to influence government officials at various levels. Gradually, local governments started to appreciate the programme and take part in providing support in mobilizing community and establishing linkage with formal primary schools. Setting operational policy on the transfer of *ACCESS* students to the formal school was a turning point and important progress made by local governments. And thus, those who graduate the complete three years *ACCESS* programme could join to 5<sup>th</sup> grade in the formal school. Then after, *ACCESS* is started to be seen and considered as feeder and satellite centers to the second cycle primary education. In 2003, more than 25,800 out-of-school and disadvantaged children, in five regional states, were attending basic education in *ACCESS* centers run by AAE's partner organizations.

**Table 8:** Contribution of *ACCESS* in GER and girl's participation<sup>5</sup>: AAE's partner project areas in 2003

Project areas	Number of children attending in <i>ACCESS</i> centers	% Share of girls	% Share of GER
AAE's partners NGOs	25,800	45%	11%

In order to systematically address the challenges that *ACCESS* faces and overcome policy constraints to widely disseminate the concept and share experiences, AAE has promoted and taken leading role in the establishment of networks and forums at national and regional levels. AAE's grassroots experiences, its participatory development approach and wider geographic coverage, and working modality through partnership have all contributed to enhance its position, credibility and recognition in the NGOs sector in Ethiopia, and subsequently has given leverage to play significant role in networks and forums. Its prominent position as proactive member of the executive committee in NGOs' umbrella organization referred to as 'Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA)', and its increased number of partners have amplified its leverage to promote its development philosophy, strategies and experiences.

Basic Education Network (BEN), a national level network, is established in 1998/99 by nineteen members of local and international NGOs, of which eleven were AAE's partners. Its membership has grown to 35, eight international and twenty-seven local NGOs. BEN is well recognized by the NGO sector and partly, donor community, and has the following broad objectives (1) sharing experience among members, (2) disseminating good practices, (3) maintaining database, documenting and researching experiences, (4) lobbying and influencing government and development actors, and (5) collectively representing its members and bridging with donors and government.

As the regional governments are mandated to issue laws and policies, AAE has valued the strategic importance of establishing regional forums to share region-specific experiences among the forum members and collectively influence regional policies. And thus, AAE has supported the establishment of regional forum in *Amhara*, while other two forums are underway in *Oromiya* and *SNNP* regions. The first regional forum, *ATKLT*<sup>6</sup>-*Amhara* Region Education Development and Cooperation, is formed by nine NGOs and the Education Bureau of *Amhara* Regional Government in 1999 with strong support by AAE. It has currently 135 members, consists of ten NGOs and 125 representatives from the implementing government offices at *Wereda* and zonal levels. As some of the influential political figures also happen to be leaders of AAE's partner organizations, the establishment of the forums and promotion of ABE in *Amhara* region have received great political support. It is worth noting that the *Amhara*

<sup>5</sup> Only AAE's partner programmes are considered, and many others scaled up through self-breeding strategy and other than AAE-support are not captured.

<sup>6</sup> *ATKLT* refers to a local language that denotes *Amhara Timihirt Kililawi Limatina Tibibir*

regional state has advanced far ahead in terms of incorporating *ACCESS/ABE* into its regular education sector programme. All 114 *Weredas* in *Amhara* region are running ABE. Likewise, AAE partners in SNNP and *Oromiya* regions, in collaboration with the respective regional education bureaus, are about to establish similar forums. Those forums and networks have provided the platform for AAE and its partners to widely share their experience and influence other NGOs to follow *ACCESS* model. Besides, a number of organizations have accessed various technical supports from the network and assumed to replicate *ACCESS* in their respective project areas.

In line with Fowler, and Edwards and Hulme argument, changes took place in the quality of delivery system, the content of the programme, relationship with beneficiaries and other stakeholder, culture, structure and accountabilities exhibited as expansions occur (Fowler, 1988; Edward and Hulme 2002:59). More funding from diverse sources, change in organizational structure and staff profiles, additional strategic partnership arrangements and accountability patterns were few of the changes registered while scaling up occurs through partnership, networking and forums. As part of promoting decentralization within AAE, partnership arrangements with national NGOs are delegated to AAE regional offices. And thus, mandated to coordinate and promote regional initiatives and engage in public policy advocacy that contribute and make regional or wider impact.

#### **4.1.3 Working in Partnership with Government**

NGOs' strategic alliance with government has great potential for scaling up and making a difference in development. Traditionally, most NGOs have been suspicious of governments, and similarly governments often share suspicious view of NGOs (Bratton, 1990). Edward and Hulme (2002) note that government structures are often rigid, hierarchical, autocratic, and have a natural tendency to centralization, bureaucracy and control. Nonetheless, there are sound rationales for NGOs to enter into a positive relationship and work with government as government remains to be largely responsible for poverty alleviation and sustainable development for the country. As Edward and Hulme (2002:56) pointed the aim of the strategy of working with government is to foster more appropriate and effective policies and practices which will eventually be of benefit to poorer and less powerful people. Tandon (1991) clarifies the NGO-state partnership as a genuine partnership between NGOs and the government to work on a problem facing the country or a region based on mutual respect, acceptance of autonomy, independence, and pluralism of NGO opinions and positions, but this does not mean the sub-contracting of placid NGOs.

AAE has developed excellent profile in terms of its development approach and working in partnership with national NGOs, and holds an influential position in NGO sector in Ethiopia. However, its development philosophy and approach did not widely expand beyond its partners and limited NGO circle. And thus, AAE has decided to enter into strategic partnership to work with government to make wider impact and difference. Clark (1991) points out, if government has a positive agenda and where NGOs have shown visible impact, there is the potential for a strong, collaborative relationship between government and the NGO. On the other hand, if the government's commitment to poverty reduction is weak, NGOs performance, and thus their impact will be limited. A healthy relationship is only conceivable when both parties share common objectives and build trust to each other.

As a tradition, AAE employs participatory approach in all stages of the project cycle. This approach primarily centers the community and also provides adequate room to government and other stakeholders to participate in the process. The exercise allows the community and government to know more about AAE and its strong pro-poor agendas and commitments. Such interactions with wider development actors, at various levels, develop rapport and build trust between AAE and third parties.

Though various initiatives in involving and working with local governments are exhibited at AAE's and partner's project levels, they were not primarily targeted to make wider impact. Rather, they were mainly to create smooth operational relationship and transferring ownership to local government and community, and ensuring the sustainability of *ACCESS* at local levels. Relatively large scale, project-based and advocacy-oriented partnership with government has been introduced in 1999 and 2000.



This phase of strategic route, which covers 1999 to date, is a period of maturity where AAE has developed the confidence to widely scale up and get into policy dialogue with government. AAE has been broadly engaged with government at three levels: (1) project-based partnership i.e. joint implementation of *ACCESS* project in two zones of *Amhara* and *Oromiya* regions; (2) lobbying and advocacy at national and regional level; (3) persuading and sensitizing local governments at AAE's and partners' project areas. However, this section only examines advocacy-oriented project-based partnership with government. The other two are dealt in other sections.

AAE has recognized that the scaling up route of working in partnership with the national NGOs has to be complemented by working in partnership with government for further scaling up and quick recognition of *ACCESS* by policy makers. The project-based partnership with government has threefold objectives: (1) delivering the service via the already existing government structure in relatively low cost, (2) proving the relevance and complementarity of *ACCESS* to the formal education, and subsequently influencing government to take *ACCESS/ABE* as one component of its regular programme, and (3) building the capacity and confidence of government in order to widely disseminate the concept, share the experience to their counter parties, institutionalize *ACCESS* and ensure its sustainability.

How did AAE identify the priority project areas and committed partners? Given the prominent position AAE holds in the arena of ABE, AAE is often invited in regional and national level workshops related to the review and promotion of basic education. Those forums have provided opportunity for AAE to understand the overall situation of basic education in the various zones and *Weredas* in the country and also gauge the commitment, strength and capacity of the potential implementing bodies. Broadly, *North Shoa* and *Jimma* zones in *Amhara* and *Oromiya* regions, respectively, are identified as potential target areas to promote the stated objectives of working in partnership with government.

Subsequent discussions have taken place between AAE senior experts and the zonal and regional education department officials. It was accompanied by preparing the project concept paper stating the situation of out-of-school children, enrollment rates and commitment to work with AAE in the promotion of ABE in their respective zones. Right after AAE's acceptance, project-planning workshops were organized to design and formulate a full-fledged project. Three *Weredas*, in *North Shoa* zone, *Amhara* Region and six *Weredas* in *Jimma* zone, *Oromiya* Region, are identified as priority project areas in 1999 and 2000 respectively. In view of sustaining the programme and policy-influencing objective, AAE has involved the concerned government officials, ranging from *Wereda* to national levels, in all stages of the project cycle. The roles and responsibilities of all parties are defined, and project agreement that covers three-years (complete cycle for *ACCESS*) is signed between AAE and the respective regional education bureaus. Among the conditions and terms reflected in the agreement, sustaining the initiative after the termination of the project was core.

Before the actual implementation of the project, the regional, zonal and *Wereda* level education bureaus concerned experts were provided exposure visit to the project areas of AAE and its partners. The exposure visit did not only provide insight and experience on the implementation of *ACCESS*, but also created an aspiration and motivation for those government official and experts to make basic education accessible through alternative approach for the large proportion of out-of-school and marginalized children in their respective localities. It was a breakthrough for them to change their attitude and believe that *ACCESS* can reach significant number of out-of-school disadvantaged children and perform to equivalent standard to formal basic education. It is worth mentioning that extreme commitment and motivation of the coordinators of the two projects are found the pillar for the success and further scaling up in their respective zones and regions.

Those projects initially availed basic education for 3,046 and 14,667 disadvantaged out-of-school children in *North Shoa* and *Jimma* zones in 1999 and 2000, respectively. As of end of 2003, under the two projects, more than 34,382 out-of-school children were attending their basic education in *ACCESS* centers. The two projects register notable achievement.

**Table 9:** Contribution of *ACCESS* in GER and girl's participation<sup>7</sup>: AAE-government joint projects in 2003

Project area	# of children attending in <i>ACCESS</i> centers	% share of girls	% share of GER	% increase in Girls' participation
AAE with zonal Government				
<i>North Shoa</i> zone	8,154	47%	22%	25%
<i>Jimma</i> zone	26,228	49%	15%	17%

Besides, due to high demand and pressure by the community and local government, significant number of *ACCESS* centers are established and run jointly by the community and local governments. Several NGOs have also visited the project and shared experience in view of introducing *ACCESS* in their respective project areas. However, data is not available on the size and coverage of programme scaled up as a result of multiplier effect and outside AAE's direct support.

In regard to the sustainability of *ACCESS*, currently, local governments have taken over the project and all *ACCESS* centers are fully run by community and local government, in cost-sharing scheme. In the same way, the zonal governments of the two project areas have passed a resolution to replicate and scale up *ACCESS* within and out-side the project *Weredas* in their respective zones.

As a result of concretely registered achievement of *ACCESS* in reaching out-of-school children in a flexible and cost effective way, and mainly due to notable support by key political figures in *Amhara* region, the *Amhara* regional government has passed a resolution in 2002 to aggressively scale up ABE, particularly *ACCESS* across the region. Subsequently, it is determined to establish and run at least 5 *ACCESS* centers in all 114 *Weredas* of the region starting from 2004/2005. In 2003/04, more than 210,000 children have been attending in more than 1856 *ACCESS* centers, which constitute 15% of the gross enrollment rate of 2002/03 of the region.

#### 4.1.4 Self-breeding

Self-breeding is a concept contributed by Chambers (1992), that refers to a spontaneous and informal spread of the programme without systematic and planned expansion by the initiator. Apart from the adoption of deliberate scaling up strategies, the success story of *ACCESS* has been widely disseminated informally and adopted by various development actors. Bratton also pointed that a sizeable voluntary sector, which also interacts with the public and private sector, is able to achieve a significant multiplier effect on its own efforts (Bratton, 1990). The success and potential of *ACCESS* in availing basic education to the needy children in flexible and cost-effective ways and the failure of the formal education system to fulfill the basic right of access to basic education has created great demand for ABE by the community, local government and NGOs.

The scaling up of *ACCESS* in relation to self-breeding has become very much visible since 2000 and continued to date. Chambers noted that the spread of the 'good practice' can occur in several ways such as informal channels of networks, publications, word of mouth and so on (Chambers, 1992). The self-breeding scaling up of *ACCESS* has followed two main tracks: (1) the demonstrative effect of *ACCESS* projects on the community, local government and NGOs, and (2) the multiplier effect of sharing and promoting the concept, need and relevance of ABE/*ACCESS* in various network, forums and meetings.

It is reported that, indiscriminately, in all project areas where *ACCESS* has been adopted, the local government and community have replicated *ACCESS* and expanded the outreach by their own initiatives. Also the neighboring *Wereda* governments, outside the project area, have introduced *ACCESS* widely. Under certain circumstances, for such initiatives, AAE and its partners normally provide training, share

<sup>7</sup> Only children attending basic education under AAE-government projects are considered, and many other scaled up through self-breeding strategy and others are not captured.

experience and organize project visits. Requests for assistance and partnership to expand the outreach of *ACCESS* within and beyond the project area, by local governments, NGOs and community, have been constantly increased.

The sharing of experiences on the contribution and relevance of *ACCESS* by the *Wereda* education offices, where *ACCESS* takes place, in the zonal level government councils, has inspired other non-project *Weredas* to adopt *ACCESS* in their respective *Weredas* in the zone. A resolution passed by *Siltie* zone government council, *SNNP* region, to scale up *ACCESS* in all *Weredas* of the zone, triggered by the experience in *Dalocha Wereda*, is one example of such kind of scaling up route. Likewise, many NGOs have approached AAE and its partners to share experience on the design, implementation and management of *ACCESS* programme in view of replicating *ACCESS*. It is assumed that other NGOs and actors have further replicated *ACCESS* through similar chain. However, no record is available on the scale of such projects. Chambers (1992) noted that organizations neglect the self-spreading aspect of scaling up and often their impacts are not accounted in evaluation.

#### **4.1.5 Lobbying and Advocacy**

Though lobbying and advocacy are different strategies, they are treated, here, together as their ultimate objective is influencing policies and practices that are detrimental to development. The promotion of lobbying and advocacy are advisable under the condition where government recognizes and respects the contribution of NGOs, and NGOs have the competence for policy dialogue (Clark, 1991:86). Lobbying and advocacy efforts may target at community, private sector, NGOs and governments or any combination. In this section, the emphasis is on influencing government policies and practices since government is the primary responsible body in creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. AAE's strong relationship with its partners and other stakeholders, and its engagement at micro-level have become instrumental and strong hold for its advocacy and lobbying efforts. Clark (1992) strongly advises NGOs to capitalize on their knowledge of grassroots realities in their dialogue with governments and donor agencies.

Until 2002, there was no uniform recognition and clear policy framework on the implementation and administration of ABE, both at national and regional levels. AAE has engaged in policy dialogue with MOE at various levels. Though the regional governments do have the mandate to formulate and issue policies, none of them had policy on the provision of ABE. Most NGOs forget the structural problem and macro context that constraint wider development impact (David, 1992:139). However, due to lobbying and influencing efforts by AAE, its partners, BEN and regional forums, the federal government and three regional governments i.e. *Oromiya*, *Amhara* and *SNNP* have issued policies and directives on the implementation of ABE since 2002.

At national level, AAE was a member of the taskforce set up by the federal MOE to review and draft policy for the provision of ABE. It has provided the opportunity to AAE to share its experience and influence the national policy on ABE. The federal government has recently issued a strategic plan and operational guidelines to largely scale up ABE, particularly in four pastoral and semi-pastoral regions namely *Afar*, *Somali*, *Benishangul Gumuz* and *Gambella*.

As the decentralization policy has granted significant policy making power to the regional, zonal and *Wereda* (district) level governments, AAE regional and project level offices also lobby and advocate for pro-poor policies, including *ACCESS*. At regional government level, particularly in three regions namely *Amhara*, *Oromiya* and *SNNP*, AAE's and its partners' experiences have become the basis for the regional policies on the delivery and implementation of ABE.

The education bureau of *Amhara* region has advanced very well in promoting ABE. As decided to provide basic education to millions of out-of-school children via the alternative route, in the annual regional government council meeting, all *Weredas* (114) are running at least 5 *ACCESS* centers. And thus, more than 210,000 children were attending basic education in the ABE route in 2002/03. The gross enrollment rate has risen from 55% to 64.4%, and half of the annual growth rate is attributed to the ABE/*ACCESS*. Furthermore, the *Amhara* regional education bureau is under way to sign a project

agreement with Save the Children Denmark and Norway to expand *ACCESS* and reach more than 500,000 out-of-school children in the coming three years. In SNNP region, it is planned to establish and run three *ACCESS* centers, in the first year and then after doubling every year, in each *Weredas* (104 of which 8 are special *Weredas*) of the region, for three years starting from 2004. Likewise, the *Oromiya* region education bureau is also under preparation to set a region wide plan (targeting all 197 *Weredas*) to expand basic education through the alternative route. As witnessed by the education bureaus officials, in three regional states, the influence and contribution of AAE and its partners in the formulation and issuance of regional policies and strategic plan is remarkable. Besides, AAE keeps on supporting the establishment and strengthening of networks and forums that reinforce the scaling up and sustainability of ABE.

Likewise, at zonal and *Wereda* levels, AAE is engaged in partnership, in different capacities, to institutionalize *ACCESS* in government structure. As part of its advocacy and influencing strategy, AAE jointly with two zonal governments, in *Oromiya* and *Amhara* Regions, has been running *ACCESS* programmes. These project-based and advocacy-oriented partnership with two zonal governments, *North Shoa* and *Jimma* zones, have become a practical learning ground for the government to experiment/pilot *ACCESS* on the ground through their own structure. They found it palatable, simple and cost-effective, and in turn, have been advocating for the scaling up and expansion of *ACCESS* to other *Weredas* and zones in their respective regions. As seen in the strategic route four, the projects have registered remarkable results and have become part of their regular education sector programme. Although those projects were also programme expansion in a way, the primary purpose was to influence governments, at all levels, towards the issuance of ABE policy and push governments run *ACCESS* as part of their regular programme.

In the same line, the project level staff have been closely working with *Wereda* level government officials towards improving project level operational constraints. Many of them have achieved changing *Wereda* governments' attitude, which later on followed by issuing enabling operational policies and replicating *ACCESS* by their own initiatives. The *Wereda* governments, in all project areas run by AAE and its partners, have committed to take over the project after the completion of the project period and scale up for wider impact. In those project areas where AAE and its partners phased out, *ACCESS* centers are fully run by the local government and community under the supervision of *Wereda* education department.

The exposure visit arrangement to AAE's and partners' projects and invitations to attend various experience sharing and review workshops have pursued government officials to change their attitude towards ABE. Such interactions have enhanced the relationship between AAE and government officials at various levels and built good image to AAE. Also, both the national network and regional forums have played important role in bringing NGOs together and stand for collective negotiation with government for wider policy change. Korten pointed that networks and forums, apart from facilitating exchange of experience and dissemination of information among their members, are valuable instruments for advocacy and influencing works (Korten, 1990). Though networks and forums are not legally recognized by the Ethiopian law, they represent their members and informally bridge and interact with government and donor groups. However, the impact and advocacy role of BEN and regional forums are constrained by lack of legal status. The growing number of actors engaging in the promotion of ABE and joining the networks and forums would further strengthen the negotiation and influencing power of the networks, which also boost leverage for wider impacts.

BEN has contributed a lot in terms of sensitizing and changing government officials' attitude, at the federal level and feeding experiences to and influencing the national policy on ABE, primarily through inviting government officials and experts to review, experience sharing and consultative forums. It also organizes celebrations on the internationally designated dates such as Global Week of Action (the Dakar Declaration on Education For All) and International Literacy Day and sensitizes various actors to take part in the promotion of basic education.

The extent of the problem and demand created, and the spread of ABE and its potential in addressing the huge unmet demand for basic education are found favorable conditions to put pressure on

government and influence the prevailing policy. Down the road, governments, at all levels, have shown great interest in *ACCESS* programme and started to recognize its potential contribution in addressing the wider problem of out-of-school children.

AAE's lobbying and advocacy efforts are not only limited to the national boundary, rather strongly linked to the international advocacy and campaign group through ActionAid UK office. The rationale for advocacy in the north, as Edward and Hulme (2002) pointed out, is emanated from the premise that the causes of underdevelopment lie in the political and economic structures of an unequal world, and thus addressing such issues is extremely difficult, if not impossible, in the NGOs' traditional way of doing things. Apart from actively participating in various NGOs' consortia for joint negotiation and influence, ActionAid has set up advocacy working groups at international levels. As a result of strong micro-macro linkage and enhanced legitimacy, AA keeps on raising increased funding for *ACCESS* programme and basic education at large from bilateral and multilateral institutions.

In collaboration with other like-minded organizations, the advocacy working groups make voice to the international development organizations and donors to pay attention to the provision of basic education and make it their priority development agenda. However, it should be noted that the fundamental requirement for successful influencing is a degree of openness on the part of the organization that is being lobbied, and if this is not present, whatever persuasion will not induce changes in the system (Edward and Hulme, 2002).

#### **4.1.6 Mainstreaming**

This strategy may not stand alone as a separate strategic route, rather as an outcome of the broader objective of scaling up and effect of one or a combination of the various scaling up strategies. It generally aims at incorporating the concept or approach into the national or local development program to bring about significant impact. The promotion of ABE at micro-level is not only an instrument for accessing basic education for out-of-school children, but also a priority policy advocacy theme in AAE, as a right for children and an alternative and complementary approach to attain one of the MDGs, UPE and EFA by 2015.

At the initial stage of the introduction of *ACCESS*, government officials, at all levels, viewed the initiatives as downgrading the primary education and the education system in general. As it was not recognized and accredited by the MOE, even its contribution was not counted and reflected in the official statistical reports. Likewise, nothing, in regard to the ABE, was reflected in the first five years' (1997/98 – 2001/02) Education Sector Development Program, except literacy and skills training program to adults under the NFE section of the document (MOE, 1997). However, the extent of demand for basic education and the slow expansion of formal primary education with all its internal inefficiency, and the continuous lobbying and advocacy by NGOs have forced the government to radiate its eyes and look beyond the conventional approach to basic education.

In 1998, the Policy and Human Resource Development Project Office under the Prime Minister Office, in collaboration with the World Bank has commissioned a national level research to assess the role and relevance of ABE. *ACCESS* was one of the models investigated in the study. The research concludes that: Ethiopia has to learn from both the national and international experience (e.g. ActionAid Ethiopia's ABE programme i.e. *ACCESS*) which has amply demonstrated addressing basic education in an alternative approach with simple and cost effective structure and school facilities, relevant curricula and flexible calendar and greater community participation and ownership of the programme. Subsequently, the research recommended that the Ethiopian government, in collaboration with other relevant bodies should scale up such initiative (Addis Education, Training and Development Consultants, 1998:74-75 in Tadesse, 2004:5).

Overtime, the Ethiopian government has gradually developed interest in scaling up ABE. The second (2002/03 – 2004/05) Education Sector Development Program has paid attention on the importance and expansion of ABE to out-of-school children (ESDP II, Program Action Plan, 2002:31). The search for 'good practices' in ABE indicates that *ACCESS*, with its peculiar aim, characteristics and principles,

but in different names, is found dominant and prominent. Even though slightly different delivery models are exhibited by few NGOs, they commonly share *ACCESS*'s aim and principles, and their roots traced back to *ACCESS*.

Clark pointed out that NGOs' tested 'good practices' become sustainable or of significant scale if they influence national development (Clark 1991). Following the policy recognition and the need for scaling up of ABE, the federal government has issued a separate strategic plan to reach millions of out-of-school children in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist regions namely *Afar*, *Benishangul Gumuz*, *Gambella* and *Somali* regions. It is planned to launch a large-scale ABE programme to be run by the Ministry of Federal Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Capacity Building in those regions. More than 500,000 out-of-school children are targeted to reach through the ABE by 2004/05. Though the aim, rationales and principles of the designed model of ABE for those regions are broadly similar with *ACCESS*, the characteristics and delivery modalities are adjusted to fit with the specific contexts of the pastoralist and semi-pastoralist regions. Likewise, other regional governments have shown their commitment to the scaling up of ABE, which is by and large similar with *ACCESS*.

Myers pointed the challenges of placing qualitative, decentralized and participatory approach of scaling up, in contrast with quantitative, centralized and imposed approach (Myers, 1992). However, this research doesn't attempt to evaluate such dimensions as stated under 1.5 sub-section of this study.

## **4.2 Factors affecting the success of Scaling up**

As seen above, *ACCESS*, as an alternative approach to basic education, started small as a pilot project and has transformed itself through several stages and reached to the mature stage of being incorporated in the mainstream national and regional education sector development programmes. AAE achieved such level of scaling up through the adoption of a mixture of six strategies, which are found complementary to each other. The registered scaling up of *ACCESS* has been achieved under certain internal and external factors and conditions. Those key factors contributing to the success of scaling up will be briefly discussed in the following section.

(A) Policy failure and the extent of the problem: Failure of designing and implementing appropriate policies results in failure of addressing the problem, and even exacerbating the development problem. If the consequences of policy failure exacerbate the extent of the problem, it drives development actors to look for innovative approach. Likely, development actors, including government become willing to open up spaces to consider NGOs' good practices and work together for wider impact. Similarly, if the extent of the problem is so huge and government believes in participatory development, there is high possibility for effective scaling up and wider impact and the vice versa. One of the explaining factors why *ACCESS* couldn't scale up in *Addis Ababa*, capital of Ethiopia, is mainly because of the very limited scale of the problem. As seen in the background, the GER in 2002/03 for *Addis Ababa*, one of the target project areas of AAE, is far more than 100% though there are still many school-age out-of-school children. Attempts, by AAE and its partners, to promote *ACCESS* could not create more demand unlike the cases in other regions that significantly scaled up.

(B) The nature of the activity: The rate and extent of scaling up depends on the nature of the activity in relation to cost, required skill and knowledge, adaptability to local contexts, political sensitivity and the sustainability potential. *ACCESS* is an innovative alternative approach to basic education that emerged from ActionAid international field-based experiences. It proved itself as appropriate, flexible, community-owned and managed model that brings schools/centers closer to the villages and children at extremely low cost compared to the formal school, and feeds and reinforces the formal school system. The aforementioned characteristics of *ACCESS* indicate its great potential for scaling up.

(C) The quality of the initiating organization: NGOs that stand as a learning organizations and encourage participatory decision-making can achieve great trust within and beyond their constituencies, and establish strong partnership with like-minded parties, which subsequently become a leverage to hold influential position in the broader development circle. Furthermore, the interaction with partners and wider development actors provides an opportunity, for proactive organizations, to systematically bring

actors together under networks and forums. In scaling up, Fowler argues that the quality of the relationship with various actors is more determinant than the size of the resource they command (Fowler, 1991). Besides, the capacity to mobilize actors and strength of networks and alliances are critical to influence actors in the wider development circle and make a difference. Those NGOs, with good reputation and harmonious relations with other actors, are in a better position to scale up their good practices and become effective conduit for other NGOs to make wider impact.

(D) Generating evidence through research: It is important that NGOs need to pay much attention on researching and documenting their practices, and capitalize on those realities while dialoguing, lobbying and advocating. NGOs require to keep record and process relevant data inputs from their experience as a means of refining their understanding of and position on important issues. Researching and documentation are the pillars and core values of successful scaling up. At a minimum, NGOs require some means to capture and process relevant data inputs from their experience as a means for programme improvement and generating evidence in order to effectively scale up and influence others (Korten, 1990). Though not free from limitations, AAE, as a learning organization, carries out purposeful review, reflection and research, and keeps records, which subsequently used for program learning and scaling up.

(E) Linkage with MDGs and international conventions: If the activity intended to scale up is strongly linked and assumed to contribute much to the MDGs, it can easily call the attention of government, donors and other development actors for quicker and faster scaling up. To a large extent, the recognition and success of scaling up of *ACCESS* in recent years, is also attributed to its direct link with and contribution to one of the MDGs, attaining UPE by 2015.

(F) The quality of the relationship with major actors: Clearly, mutual trust and a harmonious relationship among stakeholders are fundamental to achieve common objectives. Fowler points out that NGOs impact is more determined by their relation with government and other actors than the volume of their resources (Fowler, 1991). AAE's achievement in scaling up *ACCESS* and influencing policy provision is a concrete example, as it resulted from the harmonious relationship between AAE and the wider NGO sector and government, at various levels. AAE had carefully researched the issue in question, argued and advocated from the point of views of the needy people. Clark (1991) also pointed that if government has a positive agenda on what NGOs have shown impact, it is likely that they enter into strong partnership, and thus smoothens and speeds up the scaling up.

(G) Leadership, motivation and commitment of the partner organization: They all are critical factors for scaling up and success, in general. The success and extra advancement in scaling up of *ACCESS* in *Amhara* region is mainly attributed to the quality of leadership and commitment of key political figures. Likewise, the impediment in scaling up of *ACCESS* in *Tigray* region, one of the target project areas of AAE, is highly attributed to lack of interest and commitment by AAE's partner organization, in the presence of much better political and institutional opportunities for scaling up. Edwards and Hulme noted that the success of scaling up is determined by the degree of openness, motivation and commitment on the part of the organization targeted for (Edwards and Hulme, 2002).

(H) Working with government: AAE has been engaged in project-based and advocacy-oriented partnership with government, the primary responsible actor for designing appropriate policies and creating an enabling environment for effective development. Edwards and Hulme (2002) argue that the aim of working with government should be to foster more appropriate and effective policies and practices. In the same way, remarkable achievement has been obtained through working in partnership with government entities, which later on become a concrete basis for influencing policy at regional and national levels. As government structures stretch corner-to-corner, scaling up can be achieved faster and to significant scale through working with government. Moreover, if government promotes participatory development, good practices can benefit from the conducive environment for scaling up.

(I) Micro-macro linkage: One of the factors that limits scaling up of NGOs work is the failure of linkage between micro-level activity with the wider policy and system (Edwards and Hulme, 1992:13). AAE's micro-level engagement has facilitated practical learning for the initiating organization and become the basis for generating evidence and legitimacy while, at the same time, becomes a practical learning ground for others. Its contribution in reinforcing the various scaling up strategies and advocacy

works was significant. Undoubtedly, AAE's accumulated and systematically organized knowledge of grassroots realities is a strong basis for working in partnership with national NGOs and government. During the course of scaling up, it has contributed to AAE to hold influential position in dialogue, lobbying and influencing processes.

(J) Decentralization policy: As Mitlin and Satterthwaite (1992:177) pointed out, development policies and programmes should respond to the needs and priorities of individuals and community organizations. Since 2002, the decentralization policy has granted great deal of power to *Weredas*, where NGOs' projects are grounded. *Wereda* governments have got power to prioritize their needs, allocate resources, engage in partnership with NGOs and donors, adapt national and regional policies to the specific local context, promote new initiatives and so on. Myers points the challenges of placing qualitative, decentralized and participatory approach to scaling up. The prevailing decentralization policy has created favorable conditions for scaling up as it provides local governments to closely work with NGOs and enter into partnership. Likewise, it provides better opportunity for NGOs to easily pursue and influence local governments in order to scale up their effective good practices.

## Section 5      Conclusions

Although various development actors continued their effort to address development problems, the humbling observation is that little is achieved, and significant portions of society do not yet access to and benefit from basic services. In the course of examining scaling up of an alternative approach to basic education, this study has assessed the gap in achieving one of the MDGs, UPE by 2015 and overall performance of the conventional approach to primary education in Ethiopia. As per the MOE report, more than six million school-age children were out-of-school in 2002. Only 54% of the school-age children could access basic education with great disparity between boys and girls and among regions. Ratification of the Dakar declaration in 2000 and commitment to attain the MDGs, among which achieving UPE by 2015 and gender equity at primary education level by 2005, only add to the wish list unless concerted efforts are made to the achievement of the targets. Clearly, evidences indicate that the prevailing conventional policies and practices are inadequate to ensure one of the basic rights of children, i.e. access to basic education.

The lack of luster expansion of primary education through the conventional approach could not catch up the growing demand for basic education, let alone achieving the MDG of attaining UPE by 2015 and gender equity by 2005. This situation calls for nothing less than critical policy measures. In recognition of the problem, various responses have been exhibited from policy makers and development actors. Among the responses was the introduction of *ACCESS* by AAE.

NGOs are in better position to test out new development initiatives. Unless those tested good-practices are scaled up by major actors and ultimately incorporated in the mainstream policy framework, they remain as islands of success. *ACCESS*, as alternative approach to basic education, has gradually evolved over the years to become strategically important undertaking in AAE. As seen in section four, it started small as a pilot project, and reached the stage where it is incorporated in the mainstream national and regional education sector development programmes. Since its introduction, the type of change it has exhibited is not merely growth and expansion in quantity terms, but also some qualitative changes in purpose, function, content as well as direction.

AAE has adopted wide range of scaling up strategies, which are found complementary to each other. Each strategy has shown its typical strength and contribution in the trajectory of scaling up. During the first five years, AAE preferred to promote and scale up the approach through the adoption of self-expansion strategy. The organization was not in a position to try out other scaling up strategies since it did not develop adequate confidence. Besides, the context was not favorable to employ other scaling up strategies. Initially, *ACCESS* could not receive recognition and appreciation by government bodies, the primary actor in the sector. Rather, *ACCESS* has been viewed as downgrading the formal school system and has suffered from resistances and lack of support from government officials, at various levels. This,



in turn, has discouraged other actors to replicate *ACCESS* as they also viewed *ACCESS* not consistent to the prevailing education policy and may even cause conflict with government bodies.

Government's suspicion has seriously challenged the organization effort to further scale up *ACCESS*, even through self-expansion. However, communities' appreciation and response to the programme has encouraged AAE to further scale up *ACCESS* within and beyond the designated project areas. Sporadic and localized recognitions and cooperation have been realized from local governments at the later stage of the implementation. The situation has demanded AAE to think strategically on how to influence actors and overcome constraints of scaling up. It further called a strategic shift on scaling up, which emphasizes on working with partnership with national (local) NGOs, instead of self-expansion. The partnership strategy is also accompanied by establishing networks and forums anticipating to achieve wider impact and make differences through collective voices.

Since 1996, a strategic move towards working with partners, particularly national NGOs has been promoted. As of end of 2003, the organization has established partnership with eleven national NGOs for the joint implementation and promotion of *ACCESS* programme, and has managed to increase its outreach in five regional states out of the total nine in the country. However, like the projects run by AAE through self-expansion, *ACCESS*, initially, has faced resistance by government and lack of policy support.

In view of facilitating learning among actors, multiplying the spread of the concept and influencing the prevailing policies and practices, AAE has taken lead role in the promotion and establishment of basic education network and forums at national and regional levels. So far one national level network, BEN, and regional level forum, *ATKLT*, in *Amhara* region are established and performing promotion of ABE. Two more regional forums in *Oromiya* and *SNNP* regions are underway. Though the impact of those network and forums are limited due to lack of legal status, their role in facilitating learning among their members, disseminating the concept through the formal and informal channels and lobbying government officials and donors have well counted during the course of scaling up of *ACCESS*.

Moreover, AAE has adopted a project-based advocacy oriented partnership with government, in recognition of the limited scope of scaling up and making differences through working in partnership with national NGOs. The two *ACCESS* projects in *Amhara* and *Oromiya* regional states were implemented jointly with *North Shoa* and *Jimma* zones education departments. The aim of the project was primarily to influence government policies and practices and foster coverage through institutionalization of *ACCESS* in government structure and local development programme. The strong formal and informal relationship between AAE and government officials involved in the project and the self-demonstrative qualities of *ACCESS* have radically changed the skepticism of government officials towards *ACCESS*, at various levels. In other words, government officials who took part in the project implementation and management become advocates of *ACCESS*. Remarkable progresses are followed under government structures thereafter.

During the trajectory, AAE has developed confidence and capacity to lobby, dialogue and advocate for the promotion of *ACCESS*. Until 2002, no uniform recognition and clear policy framework on the promotion of ABE was available. The concerted efforts of AAE, its partners, networks and forums have called policy makers attention and could bring out policies on the ABE. AAE and its partners presence in various regions of the country and their laudable voices through networks and forums have influenced the federal and regional level policies, particularly in *Amhara*, *Oromiya* and *SNNP* regions. Through the various strategic routes, *ACCESS* has spread in all regions of the country and is incorporated in the mainstream national and regional education sector development programme. Those policies have become a ground for local governments to officially introduce and expand ABE in their localities.

Also, the federal government has planned to expand basic education through alternative approaches in four pastoralist and semi-pastoralist regions starting from 2004/05. It is estimated that, in those regions, more than 500,000 out-of-school children will access basic education through the alternative approach. Though the features and objectives of *ACCESS* remain the same, the delivery mechanism of *ACCESS* is different and adopts itself to fit the specific context of the pastoralist and semi-pastoralist society. Likewise, more than 500,000 children are targeted to access basic education in an alternative approach in *Amhara*, *Oromiya* and *SNNP* regional states in 2004/05. Though data related to

self-breeding scaling up is not available, the study finds out that significant number of NGOs and local governments, in all regions of the country, have replicated *ACCESS*.

To sum up, more than 66,000 children were attending, while around 75,000 children graduated the complete three-year *ACCESS* programme from *ACCESS* centers run by AAE and its partners as of end of 2003. In 2002/03, more than 210,000 children were attending their basic education in *ACCESS* centers run by *Amhara* region education department, and many others in various regions of the country. Furthermore, starting from 2004/05, government has planned to reach more than one million out-of-school children through *ACCESS*. Parallel to the scaling up of *ACCESS* in deliberate efforts, *ACCESS* is also spreading through the informal channels which this paper couldn't capture its scale and impact.

The achievements are not only attributed to the adoption of right mixes of scaling up strategies, but also by a number of factors such as the magnitude of the problem, nature of the activity, quality of the initiating organization, capacity to generate evidence, quality of the relationship with major actors and strength of partner organizations, linkage with the MDGs and international conventions and so on. Among which, AAE's harmonious relationship with various development actors, well-grounded and documented grassroots experience and self-demonstrative quality of *ACCESS* itself have counted more for the success of the scaling up. AAE has harmonious relationships with government and other development actors buying *ACCESS* and also holds strong credibility among the development community. Its innovative approach has proven itself as appropriate, cost-effective and flexible approach that complements to and is compatible with the conventional approach to basic education. Its effectiveness is observable in its capacity to attract many NGOs and governments, at all levels that are increasingly committing to scale up *ACCESS*. Undoubtedly, it has shown its potential contribution to the attainment of one of the MDGs, i.e. UPE for all by 2015.

Skepticism and resistance of government bodies to the adoption of *ACCESS* reveals their concern for quality of education and its repercussion. Whether or not service by the alternative approach have negatively affected the overall education quality is a valid research question on its own. This would require comparative analysis of achievements of students with and without participation in *ACCESS*.

The tension between skeptics and proponents of *ACCESS* is a question of balancing quality and access. In a situation where conventional approaches have sufficient capacity and resources for wider coverage, the tension between quality and access is minimal. However, when access is glaringly short of target, provision of basic services tends to be a moral and human right issue. And development actors sympathetic to the latter notion would prefer ensuring access even when it entails some loss of quality. Once skeptics are convinced, however, joint effort can be made to minimize the obvious quality gaps that were potentially damaging at the beginning. What AAE did was exactly the latter i.e. showing government and other development agents that the alternative approach is effective, and bringing actors together to overcome the weaknesses of the approach. A climate of partnership based on the principle of equality needs to be built up on.

However, the current trend indicates that the alternative approaches are spreading all over the country by various development actors without adequate organizational preparation and quality standards. AAE and other stakeholders, including governments at various levels, need to pay attention in setting the minimum acceptable standard in terms of teachers training, classrooms, curriculum, teaching/learning materials and so on. Failure in placing and enforcing appropriate minimum standard in the delivery of ABE may exacerbate the development problem under consideration and could have much worse effects than the impact caused by the failure of the conventional approach to basic education. The concern should not be quantity and merely about expanding the service, rather should be delivering reasonable quality of basic education for children.

With all the limitation of a case study, this research broadly indicates that there are prospects for scaling up NGOs' good practices and make a difference. Projections indicate that many developing countries are much behind achieving the MDGs, and Ethiopia is not an exception. As seen in this study, NGOs may have 'good practices' that can significantly contribute to effective and sustainable development. The findings have brought to surface the various mixes of strategies and the extent of difference AAE has made in ABE. *ACCESS* has become part of the mainstream development activity

under the education sector development programme and in the NGOs sector in Ethiopia. Unless NGOs properly and strategically plan and execute scaling up, their ‘good practices’ remain as ‘a drop in the ocean’. The case studied in this research is good example of how to make a difference and break ‘islands of successes’. More importantly, NGOs need to equip themselves with the strategies and apply them with due understanding of the context as the success and effectiveness of each strategy depends on various factors. Correspondingly, development actors should not be obsessed and rigid in promoting conventional approach. Rather they should provide rooms to entertain and scale up NGOs’ ‘good practices’.

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